

On the Reported Occurrence of *Maculinea arion* L. in South West Ireland

By MARK JEFFARES

(34 Highfield Road, Rathgar, Dublin 6)

I wish to state that Mr H. C. Huggins (*Ent. Rec.*, **85**: 236) is not the sole survivor of the Large Blue investigation, for I am the "youth" who originally consulted Mr E. S. A. Baynes on finding the insect in Co. Cork, and I still have his letters to me on the subject.

In the year in question, I believe 1962, I found about a dozen or so large bluish butterflies which I now believe to be *M. arion*. I managed to catch and, unfortunately, kill two specimens of this insect which was flying quite slowly in the open space immediately adjacent to the ruins of Dunboy Castle, Castledown, Bearhaven, Co. Cork. Being only a novice at the time (aged about 11 but with 4 years interest), I caught and killed the two specimens and placed them between leaves of a small pocket diary, having no other container than this. After a few days I lost interest in the rather crushed insects and threw them away. Both my parents were present at the time and vaguely remember the insects caught. I can remember them quite clearly to this day and on later seeing the illustration in the *Observer's Book of Butterflies*, I was convinced that I had seen the Large Blue. I can even remember seeing some specimens with larger black markings on the upperside of the forewings, these being females. I decided to obtain more information which I got from Mr Baynes on the status of the insect in Ireland.

Not being a botanist, I could not say whether or not its foodplant Wild Thyme grew there, but I was assured by Mr Baynes who subsequently visited the spot that it did not. As a result I dropped the matter, feeling that as Mr Baynes knew of my observations no useful purpose would be served by publication. Since then, however, on gaining more experience I became convinced that it could have been none of the possible alternatives that Baynes suggested such as *Polyommatus icarus clara* Tutt (which was abundant at this locality) or *Anaitis plagiata* L. (Treble-bar), but that the insect I took was in fact *M. arion*. Incidentally, I have since caught *A. plagiata* at Glengarriff, Co. Cork, but not at Dunboy which I subsequently revisited most years during the first two weeks of August. As I have since found no trace of *M. arion*, I can only presume that this may be an instance of an isolated colony dying out—hopefully not through my killing two specimens for which I have never forgiven myself.